

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 344

To express the sense of the Congress regarding North Atlantic swordfish
and other highly migratory species of fish.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 8, 1998

Mr. PALLONE submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was
referred to the Committee on Resources

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express the sense of the Congress regarding North
Atlantic swordfish and other highly migratory species of fish.

Whereas North Atlantic swordfish were caught on a sustain-
able basis for nearly 150 years using harpoons and rod
and reel gear;

Whereas North Atlantic swordfish populations have fallen
nearly 70 percent following the introduction of longline
fishing gear in 1963;

Whereas North Atlantic swordfish populations are at only 58
percent of levels needed to achieve the maximum sustain-
able yield—the management goal level mandated by both
the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Man-
agement Act and the International Commission for the
Conservation of Atlantic Tunas;

Whereas domestic management measures of the United States and international management measures of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas have failed to manage North Atlantic swordfish populations on a sustainable basis;

Whereas the bycatch from commercial longline and driftnet gear in the North Atlantic swordfish fishery constitutes a grave threat to the biological health of swordfish and other highly migratory species;

Whereas the average size of a commercially caught North Atlantic swordfish has fallen from 266 pounds in 1963 to just 90 pounds in 1996;

Whereas nearly 2 of 3 North Atlantic swordfish now caught in the United States commercial swordfish fishery are juveniles caught before they are capable of spawning;

Whereas longline fishing gear captures 98 percent of the swordfish taken in the North Atlantic United States swordfish fishery; and

Whereas the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas scientific body has recommended that overall fishing mortality be significantly reduced to rebuild depleted populations of North Atlantic swordfish and other highly migratory species: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
- 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that—
- 3 (1) the National Marine Fisheries Service
- 4 should implement such management measures as
- 5 will restore populations of North Atlantic swordfish

1 to levels mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
2 Conservation and Management Act within 7 years;

3 (2) to rebuild depleted North Atlantic swordfish
4 populations within 7 years, appropriate Federal
5 agencies should take action to establish a bycatch re-
6 duction framework, including a timeframe and ref-
7 erence points, to reduce the bycatch of North Atlan-
8 tic swordfish and other highly migratory species of
9 fish by 75 percent in the directed commercial sword-
10 fish fishery by 2005 through the implementation of
11 appropriate management and conservation measures,
12 with 50 percent of this reduction occurring in the
13 first 2 years;

14 (3) dead North Atlantic swordfish and all other
15 highly migratory species discarded as a result of
16 commercial fishing activities should be counted
17 against species-specific quotas of the United States
18 established as a result of domestic regulation or
19 international fishery management agreements;

20 (4) species-specific bycatch limits should be es-
21 tablished by the United States for North Atlantic
22 swordfish and all other highly migratory species,
23 that, if exceeded, trigger predetermined regulatory
24 actions having as their sole purpose the conservation
25 of highly migratory species;

1 (5) time and area closures for longline and
2 driftnet gear should be utilized for known nursery
3 areas, spawning grounds, and other areas with high
4 concentrations of commercial bycatch of North At-
5 lantic swordfish and other highly migratory species
6 to reduce its associated mortality;

7 (6) longlines intended for use in the exclusive
8 economic zone of the United States or by United
9 States fishing vessels should be limited to not more
10 than 10 standard highway miles in overall length to
11 reduce the bycatch and associated mortality of
12 North Atlantic swordfish and other highly migratory
13 species;

14 (7) the use of longlines should be prohibited in
15 the exclusive economic zone of the United States or
16 by United States fishing vessels for more than 6
17 consecutive hours without retrieving the longlines, to
18 reduce harmful levels of bycatch mortality associated
19 with the bycatch of highly migratory species;

20 (8) additional fishing gear and technique modi-
21 fications should be required as necessary to accom-
22 plish needed bycatch reduction goals for swordfish
23 and other highly migratory species;

24 (9) domestic observer coverage should be in-
25 creased to not less than 50 percent of all pelagic

1 longline and driftnet vessels pursuing highly migra-
2 tory species in United States waters;

3 (10) representatives of the United States should
4 aggressively pursue complementary international
5 conservation and management measures for highly
6 migratory species, including meaningful inter-
7 national enforcement and compliance measures, be-
8 ginning at the 1999 International Commission for
9 the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas regular meeting
10 and during the course of other international fishery
11 discussions and negotiations; and

12 (11) if conservation and management goals are
13 not adequately met in the final fisheries manage-
14 ment plan for highly migratory species, the Congress
15 should seek to enact such restrictions and conserva-
16 tion measures as are necessary to ensure that the
17 policies expressed in this concurrent resolution are
18 met in the most expeditious manner possible.

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